

The Fasting Method #188 - Member Transformation: Sooz

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[00:01:13] All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode.

Terri [00:01:19] Welcome back to another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. This is Coach Terri Lance and I'm very excited about this episode because I know how much people love transformation episodes and I think this one is going to be a great one. So I'm very fortunate to have with me today, Sooz. Those of you who are in the Community probably recognize Sooz from lots of meetings and things. But I'm really excited because, even though, Sooz, I get to see you a lot in meetings, I don't know a lot about your story. And so I'm so excited to get to hear more about you. So how are you doing today?

Sooz [00:01:59] I'm doing well, Terri. Thank you so much for inviting me to your podcast.

Terri [00:02:03] Absolutely. All right. So tell us a little bit-- you know, where did this all begin? I know it's like, "Once upon a time, in a land far, far away," but, kind of, where did your health journey begin? Where did you start to see that you needed to do some things differently?

Sooz [00:02:22] Yeah. Well, so I have had type two diabetes for quite some time. Going back to 2006, I was in my early 30s and, you know, I didn't really know what I didn't know. Like, there's that saying, "You don't know what you don't know." I'm going to fast forward a bunch of years. So that was 2006. March of 2023, I was talking to a friend and they asked me if I'd ever read any of Jason Fung's books, Dr. Jason Fung. And I'm like, "Who's Dr. Jason Fung?" I had never heard of the guy. A friend recommended that I read the book, The Diabetes Code. And I decided, sure, I'll read the book. I actually listened to the audiobook. Wow deluxe! I was both happy and also frustrated, frankly, because so many years where I could have made some changes - lifestyle, self-care, nutrition - I just truly didn't know. I didn't know. For whatever reason, my doctors were tuned into a different approach.

[00:03:23] At that point, March of 2023, I was on two types of insulin. I took insulin before meals and I took insulin at night before I went to sleep. I was also on metformin. I've always been overweight. I've been overweight pretty much my entire life since, probably, I was ten, 12 at least. And it was really interesting reading that book. It did-- like I said-- I'm going to probably say it changed my life a million times during this discussion, but it really did change my life. So March of 2023, I read the book and then I started, I'd say, dabbling with intermittent fasting. I hadn't yet found The Fasting Method Community. Somehow I had not yet really gone to the website. So I did figure out that, oh, I should do TRE for a

while (time-restricted eating) because I'm on insulin, and I shouldn't do extended fasting or fasting more than 14, 16 hours while I'm still on insulin. So my project, my first project, was time-restricted eating, no snacking, healthier foods, get off the insulin. So that was basically June of 2023 through the end of December. Then, in January, my A1C got to a low enough point that my endocrinologist agreed that I no longer needed to be on insulin.

Terri [00:04:43] Woohoo!

Sooz [00:04:44] Cheers to that!

Terri [00:04:45] Yeah.

Sooz [00:04:46] Yes! I was taking Mounjaro during that time. I started taking Mounjaro in November of 2023. So, as I was about to get off insulin, I was still taking Mounjaro. When I got off the insulin in January of 2024, I said to my endocrinologist, "Hey, I'm off insulin. I don't know if I need to be Mounjaro. I feel like the fasting, the time-restricted eating, the real, whole foods, no eating past 7:30. These things seem to be helping me and I don't know if I need Mounjaro." Her response was, "Well, I think you're going to be on it the rest of your life." And that gave me some pause. And in some ways it felt like a challenge, like, oh! Oh really? I will need to be on this the rest of my life. Let's find out. Let's see.

[00:05:33] At that point, January 2024, I started doing some longer, slightly longer, fasts. Like, I did a few 24-hour fasts, then I made my way to 42-hour fasts. I did five weeks of alternate-day fasting of 42 hours, and now I'm going to do a little more fast forwarding. June 6th of 2024, my A1C was 5.1.

Terri [00:05:57] Wow!

Sooz [00:05:58] Let's see. I have a note here. My A1C was 10.6 on January 17th, 2021. On June 6th of 2024, it was 5.1. And I had a meeting with my endocrinologist and I said, "Hey, about that needing to take Mounjaro the rest of my life. What do you think?" I actually thought I was losing too much weight because I was doing all the lifestyle, food, self-care, nutrition changes on top of taking Mounjaro. And, you know, I respect everyone in their choices and what we all need to do to take care of ourselves. I can only speak for myself, but I didn't need it. Now, 100%, it helped with my appetite concerns. When I got off Mounjaro, 100%, on June 6th, those next few months were not easy. No joke. They were not easy. But I feel that because of-- now I'm going to sound like a little bit of a commercial, but this is not a paid endorsement. If it wasn't for The Fasting Method coaches and Community, it would not have been-- it would have been much harder because I'm really good at starting things, but seeing something through for months and months (and now it's been a year and a half), that's just unreal for me. That just doesn't happen. So I feel like having the Community and the resources and all of that was just huge.

Terri [00:07:23] So, Sooz, I know that some of our listeners will understand just how significant that was, what you just described. Hopefully, many people in our community know that, by and large, not just in the U.S. but in many countries, type two diabetes is thought of as progressive and chronic, you're never going to change it, and it's only going to get worse. But what you just described is that, over about a three and a half year period of time, you brought it down into a healthy range that most medical folks wouldn't believe would be possible based on some of the lifestyle changes you made, that they might not understand the power of that. So I hope that all listeners really hear how significant that was. It wasn't because we added six more types of medication. Actually, in that process,

you were getting rid of medications, you know, by working with your medical team. I'm curious to hear a little bit about what other things were you noticing during that time as you were bringing your HbA1C down so much and as your body was changing. What kinds of things did you notice?

Sooz [00:08:42] The side effect of taking better care of myself was that I have lost a lot of weight. I'm not at what you would call the 'maintenance and beyond' stage. I'm not quite there. I've kind of got like 30 to 40 pounds to go, if we're talking about weight. I mean, I'm trying to consider other health factors more than the weight, but we all understand weight, so it's sometimes just like a shortcut to talking about our success with our health, but, yeah, I mean, I feel like it helped my self-care, mental health. I was eating better. I was feeling better. I did not know when I was-- you know, back when I had that 10.6% A1C, I didn't actually know how bad I felt. Now, if I decide to eat something that is not my food, I'll feel some pain in my feet, in my legs. And I've thought about this. Wow, that was my normal three and a half, four-plus years ago. And I just didn't know. I didn't know because that was just life, and I thought whatever I was feeling was just how I felt. And now that I'm taking better care of myself, if I ever go off plan a little bit, it really is pretty remarkable how I can literally feel it. If I eat something that is truly not my food, it will manifest fairly quickly for me. I mean, I know that doesn't happen for everyone. I think some people feel things, some people don't, but now I have physical reactions to things that I just didn't notice before.

Terri [00:10:16] You know, as I'm listening to you describe that, I'm thinking of my experience with this, and so many people in our community, and clients that I've worked with. So I'm curious, for you, what do you notice about, when you do make some choices that maybe are off your normal plan, what's it like getting back on your plan again? What's that process like for you now?

Sooz [00:10:40] It's definitely evolving and it's getting less and less, I feel, where I have to get back on it. Let's see. During fall of 2024, I reached my lowest weight since, probably, high school. I'm 51 years old, so that was a while ago. And then I was dealing with some life stuff, we've all got life stuff, and I gained quite a bit of weight; I gained 17 pounds. And I've gained 5 pounds here, maybe even 10 pounds. Then I'd lose it, then I'd keep losing more, you know, I'd get back on it. But that 17 was wild. I was like, "Oh, this is not what I'm really going for here." And I just leaned into doing the work - TRE, extended fasting, fat fasting, movement, exercise, water with electrolytes. I didn't even know-- before I joined TFM (The Fasting Method), I didn't know that hydration was more than water. I feel a little bit ignorant saying that out loud, but, yes, indeed, I thought hydration was just water. And also January of 2024, I had alcohol for the last time. I just decided to take that out. And I like my cocktails, but there's no more Soozle in my life. That's my cocktail that I named after myself!

Terri [00:12:00] It also sounds like you like not being on complicated medications, you like not having pain in your joints and in your body, that there are payoffs for making some of those decisions of letting go of some difficult things for us.

Sooz [00:12:20] Yeah. And I basically decided that I need to be all in for the rest of my life. Like this is-- you know, my mom died when she was quite young; she was in her mid-50s. And I'm approaching my mid-50s and would like to keep going. You know, I do wish that-- everything I've learned in the past year and a half, I wish she had that information and knowledge, but she didn't. So I'm trying to live my life as best I can now with the

information I have, better self-care approach, and just, you know, see where I can take this.

Terri [00:13:00] I'm curious if, as you talked about, when you make some decisions differently now, you can feel it differently. You can feel joint pain, or pain, and inflammation and things. I'm curious if you've noticed any other changes. For example, for me, before I learned about eating better and doing fasting, I was having a fair bit of neuropathy pain in my upper thighs, and I don't have that anymore. Again, I thought for sure this meant I'm going to have this pain forever, and I read about what comes next. And what comes next is, eventually, amputations and things, and it really scared me. So I'm curious if you've had any other physiological changes along the way.

Sooz [00:13:51] Yeah, the neuropathy is the pain that I was describing, but that's a good point too. It was literally neuropathy, I'm pretty sure. On the positive side of the change-- I was diagnosed with severe sleep apnea. I've had that for a long time, but the more recent test I had that confirmed severe sleep apnea was sometime in 2020. Well, after all this weight loss and all the health transformation I've made, I reached out to a sleep specialist doctor and asked if I could have a new sleep test because I was like, "Hey, I don't know. Like, I doubt that I still have severe sleep apnea." And, hey, guess what? I have mild sleep apnea.

Terri [00:14:29] Nice.

Sooz [00:14:29] And I might not have to use the CPAP machine forever, which also is amazing. So that was like a positive thing that's happened as a result of just trying to stay the course and do the thing. I have now kind of pivoted to 'foods that are not my foods are basically poison'. I just try to reframe. Like, "Well, sure, I suppose I could have that poison, but why would I want to do that"? So, I mean, I think most of my life, if not all of my life, I've looked to food as my companion and for comfort. And that's good times and bad times. And I'm trying to find different friends, friends other than food. I will always love food. Food is awesome, we need it to survive. I just want to change my approach to how I interact with food, and I think I've made some progress with that.

Terri [00:15:24] As I mentioned in the beginning, one of the reasons that I was excited about getting to talk to you today is because you attend a lot of meetings, I see you on the screen often, so I know you're actively digging in and working on things. And you know, and many people here who are in the Community know, that my groups tend to be a little more focused on mindset, behavior, and emotions. And so that's where I get to see you the most, in those topics. I'm curious if you could talk at all about what this journey has been like for you in those areas, what you've worked on in the mindset category, or behavior change, or emotionally.

Sooz [00:16:10] After I read Dr. Fung's book, The Diabetes Code, I realized that the knowledge is great and it's helpful to know what really is possible, but, without self care, it doesn't matter. Like, I'm smart, I can figure stuff out. I can read a lot of books, listen to a lot of audiobooks, do this, do that, but it really doesn't matter if I don't care about myself, if I don't truly care about myself. And I think that I've always felt like, "Oh, if I have self confidence and I care about myself," somehow that's, "Oh, I have an ego, I'm egotistical," and that's not it at all. Like, we have to care about ourselves first. It's like putting your own oxygen mask on. So I think that that's something that I've kind of made my way to getting better at, and I feel like I had to start with caring about myself before I could put in the work with-- I see it as like, you know, I'm a-- part of my work is project manager. Anyone can

learn the technical aspect or the skills of a project manager, like scheduling meetings, doing planning, timelines, doing this-- schedule-- you know, doing all the things that are a part of being a project manager, but it's the soft skills that make me an awesome project manager. Like, you know, my relationship building, and the things that you cannot really teach someone. And I feel like that is what I needed to lean into first while I was doing TRE and trying to-- you know, working to get off insulin, I had to tune into this self-care stuff because otherwise this will not last. It just won't. I've been on a bazillion diets. When I was a kid (I think I was 14), my mom took me to Weight Watchers meetings and we had the weigh ins. That was in the 80s, 1980s. Like, I've been on all kinds of diets. I approach this as a lifestyle change. It's permanent and it's changed my life. So cheers to that.

Terri [00:18:05] I love that you just highlighted that necessary step of caring enough about yourself because you've used this term a couple of times today. It's work. You have to do the work. And it's really hard to do the work that's not what everyone else would have you do. All of your friends, family, whatever, they're not like, "Oh, my gosh, you should just fast some more." They're like, "Why are you doing that? That's insane. What do you mean you're not going to eat this? Oh, just eat some of it." So it is actually requiring you to go against the norm and do the hard work. And it's really hard, like you said, to ask ourselves to do that if we don't care enough about ourselves. There's not a good payoff, it's unnecessary. And so I love that you emphasized that part of the transformation. Even before you came off medication and before you lost a significant amount of weight, you had to start caring about you.

Sooz [00:19:10] Absolutely. And one of my-- I don't know a better way to say it, but one of my mantras is the number 79. A couple of months ago, that was my blood glucose number when I checked in the morning. When I got up-- I had three meals the day before and the next morning my blood sugar was 79. That's really good. That's really, really, really good. So now-- and it doesn't have to be-- I like to be under 100 when I wake up, but 79? Sign me up! So whenever I'm thinking like, "Oh, I want to have that thing that I don't really eat anymore, but I really want that thing," I just say to myself, "79 Sooz, 79." And that doesn't always, you know, wipe away the difficulty of saying no to the thing, but, I don't know, it's some perspective of like, "No, I can do this." It's not always easy, and, you know, the food, the industrial-food world we live in, certainly, does not make it easy for us to make good choices. They do not give us the best food that we could have. We have to really make the effort to eat well, but it's worth it. And, yeah, cheers to 79!

Terri [00:20:19] I love that because it's really one of those examples of eating that food, whatever it is-- and I'm not saying this works every time, like you said, but eating that food, how I'm going to feel eating that food, doesn't feel as good as 79 feels. Like, you've really been able to hone in on that WHY and how valuable that is to you.

Sooz [00:20:43] Absolutely.

Terri [00:20:44] That's fantastic. All right. So I'm always curious, when someone comes in and shares their story with me, to ask about helping other people in their journey who might be earlier on in their journey, who might read the book and think, "Oh my gosh, that sounds too hard," or maybe they join the Community and they they get scared, what would you do with where you are now in your journey? What would you want to have known in the beginning of your journey? What advice do you have for you at that stage?

Sooz [00:21:21] I think I would like to have known to lean into the mindfulness aspect. You know, I didn't know what box breathing was until I joined TFM, The Fasting Method

Community. I feel a little silly saying that as well, that I didn't know, but there's just-- I mean, we're breathing all the time, right? I can do box breathing literally any time, and it does work. Like, I have a smartwatch and I'll look at my heart rate on my smartwatch before I start, especially if I'm a little agitated or something's going on and I need to relax a little bit. I'll look at my watch, I'll see the number, the heart-rate number, I'll do some box breathing, I'll look at my watch again, and it has gone down. It has, legit, gone down. So I think just tuning into-- I guess it's really just a lot of just tuning into the self-care. I figured that out a year and a half ago. What I really would have liked to have figured that out is 20 years ago. Back in 2006, which is more than 20 years at this point-- I think-- I'm not going to do the math. Whenever 2006 was, I wish I had known that 'I'm worth it and, yes, I'm going to tune into my self-care' because that makes everything else easy. Like your mindset and healthy habits meetings-- lately, I haven't been able to go to a lot of other meetings, but I try to at least go to yours. It's easier-- the time of day is often easier for me, and just-- you know, there was a recent meeting and someone talked about how they're really good at doing something when it's about their survival. And that really shook me. That person sharing that has made it easier, in a way, for me-- I'm trying to see if I can go-- like, how many days can I go without-- basically staying on track? And that statement really was just wild. I'm like, "OMG! Yes, that is what I've been doing my whole life." I will do the work if it's about survival, but we need to do more than just survive. So that, I found, you know, just having-- I've just been leaning into that a lot.

Terri [00:23:25] And also that idea that it's not just when we're in crisis mode, that the more proactive we are with that self care that you're describing, the less likely we wind up in those more crisis moments with our health and things. So that's really a powerful piece of feedback.

Sooz [00:23:45] Yeah, I have real health stuff that I don't want to get off course anymore. I mean, there are things that I can't reverse. I have diabetic retinopathy in my left eye (I think it's technically in both, but it was really bad in my left eye.), but I am kind of curious- like, well, they said that I couldn't reverse type two diabetes-- I mean, I guess I haven't officially reversed it per se, but I've got my A1C really low. My A1C is lower than two of my doctors', so I'm just kind of curious, like, well, what else can I turn around, or at least stop from progressing further? That's the other thing. Like, I look at all of this as an experiment, and that helps keep me motivated. I don't know if it's because I'm a nerd (I like experiments), but I view everything I'm working on is just part of an experiment. Like, okay, let's see if I can go a month without snacking. Let's see if I can do X weeks, months of not eating past 7:30. And then it just snowballs and accumulates. And it's a good snowball. Like, oh, I did that for a month. Why don't I just keep going?

Terri [00:24:55] You know, think about whoever created the Apple Watch, or any kind of tracker of steps, that, like, revolutionized people's motivation for movement.

Sooz [00:25:07] Yeah. And I think someone just made up the 10K. I don't feel like that was really-- and I'm not speaking from fact. I probably could research that, but I feel like the 10,000 steps, while it's good, it's like five ish miles for me, based on my step, the way I walk. Five miles is fantastic, but I think it was just like a number that somebody like in a marketing department possibly made up. But I could be wrong, so maybe I shouldn't be saying that. And the movement piece of it is also crucial. When I started exercising, the fall of 2023, was I really decided, okay-- I had an exercise bike, right, that I bought in the early days of the pandemic in 2020, indoor exercise bike. It turned into the cliché - clothes were on it, stuff was on it. I was like, "Oh, did that really happen? Yes, that happened." Then, November of 2023, I decided, "All right, I've got to start using this exercise bike. I have no

excuse. Yes, I live in Boston area. Yes, it gets really cold in the winter. It's inside. No excuse." I started using it for five minutes. I could barely go five minutes. And then, six months later, I was using it for 45 minutes. So the daily movement is also a part of it that I feel is really important. It doesn't have to be 45 minutes on a bike, but just having some, like, stretching, bike, or walking. I think that's really been helpful too, and that helps my mood and it also helps with the hunger, I feel. Like, just being active and exercising, that's been really, really helpful.

Terri [00:26:44] And it helps with your insulin sensitivity, which you've changed so significantly in this journey. I like that you look at it as an experiment and you seem to be someone who's motivated by taking on a challenge. "Well, let's see what I can do in 30 days. Let's see if I can do this." I think that's great that that drives you and pushes you to try things. I love it.

[00:27:09] You know, one of the things I'm aware of as I've been listening to you as we've been talking, is it really feels to me like you've tackled this as a lifestyle change, a 'turning the ship around and going on a different course'. I'm curious, just in your experience, in your own life and in listening to others, any thoughts that you want to share as we close our discussion today about the long-term nature of this journey?

Sooz [00:27:40] It really is a lifestyle change. In order for this to be lasting, in order for me not to have to go back on my diabetes medicine, or have even other serious complications, it really does require staying the course, and doing the thing, and leaning into the hard. It's really important to just stay focused and keep going. I don't look at food now as comfort. I don't use language like 'cheat days' or, you know, some of the other language that we often use. It's a different state of mind. It's a different approach. And I'm not on a diet for like six months or a year and then I'm going to go back to whatever I was doing before, this is a new way for me to take care of myself. And not being on the medicines and not having-- it's such a change and I don't want to go back to how it was, but that is dependent on my self-care because I've got to care about myself, like I've said before. I have to be true to myself and take the self-care, all of the things, not just the, you know, the fasting, and the TRE, and all the other stuff. I really-- I guess I'm harping on this a little bit, but I really feel that none of this is doable if we don't truly care about ourselves. And it's not temporary. Giving up ultra-processed food and added sugar, sure, it's not easy, but it's worth it, and I want that 79 when I wake up.

Terri [00:29:16] Not just this week, but next week, and next year, and next decade.

Sooz [00:29:21] Absolutely.

Terri [00:29:22] Absolutely. Well, I couldn't have said that any better. It's such a powerful message that making this transformation-- that's why I refer to this as a transformation. You're not just doing a short-term plan to reach a goal and then return to all of your old steps. You're really transforming how you think about yourself, how you think about taking care of yourself, what behaviors you do to do that. And it's had a lot of impact. So I wanted to thank you for being here with me. You were so gracious in accepting my invitation and making this time work, and I just really appreciate you. And I know that people are going to appreciate hearing this because so many of us need to know that it works. We need to know that a real life person, just like me, can do this.

Sooz [00:30:18] Indeed. Well, I really appreciate you inviting me for this conversation. I am super grateful to you and The Fasting Method. It's been a wild year and a half.

Terri [00:30:28] And it's just the beginning. It's just going to keep going. So, very good. All right, everyone. I hope that you've enjoyed getting to hear our conversation today, and I'll be back soon with another episode. Until then, take good care of you.